

REMARKS

I. Introduction

Claims 14, 22 and 24 have been canceled, without prejudice, and therefore claims 13, 15-21, 23 and 25-28 are currently pending. The features of claims 14 and 22 have been incorporated in independent claim 13. The amendments to the claims do not add new matter. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are in allowable condition.

II. Drawings

Figure 1 has been objected to on the grounds that it should include a label indicating that it depicts "prior art." The drawings were also objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) for failing to show all of the features specified in the claims. In particular, the Examiner asserts that one of the consumers (that includes a microprocessor), the satellite signal distributor (wireless), the consumer (configured to carry a current), and a power circuit-breaker must be shown or the features canceled from the claims. In response, replacement sheets including amended Figures 1 and 3 are being submitted herewith.

However, with respect to the term "satellite" in "satellite signal distributor" (claim 21), "satellite" does not designate a "wireless" signal distributor, but merely designates that such a signal distributor (SLVn) is served by a master signal distributor. This is shown, for example, in Figure 3.

In addition, with respect to the phrase "one of the consumers is configured to carry a current which occurs in an event of the short circuit between the first voltage level and the second voltage level" (as recited in claim 22), it is submitted that this is shown in Figure 3 and described in the corresponding text on page 10, lines 10-22, which section states that one of the resistors R19, R20, R21 can absorb large currents in the event of a short circuit to reduce a system voltage.

In light of the amendments to the drawings and the clarifications above, it is submitted that the drawings are in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a). Withdrawal of the drawing objections is therefore respectfully requested.

III. Objections to Specification and Claims

In the Office Action several terms in the specification and claims have been objected to.

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached two (2) replacement sheets include changes to Figures 1 and 3. These sheets, which include Fig. 1 and Fig. 3, respectively, replaces the original sheets including Fig. 1 and Fig. 3. In Fig. 1, the legend "Prior Art" has been included. In Fig. 3, labels "MP" (for microprocessor) and "power circuit breaker" have been added.

The Office Action notes that the term “R16” which appears on page 6 (it actually appears at the bottom of page 5 of the substitute specification) should be “RK”. This term has been amended in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion.

With respect to the assertion that the statement “signal-power distributor SLV1 of converter W2 is then connected to other signal-power distributors SLV2 through SLVn and thus forms a master SLV15 which protects satellite signal-power distributors SLV2 through SLVn” fails to describe why satellite signal-power distributors are part of the on-board system, Applicants note that there is absolutely no legal requirement whatsoever for the Applicant to elaborate on this passage so long as one of ordinary skill in the art would understand the claimed invention from the description provided in the specification. Thus, this objection appears to merely to reflect a preference of the Examiner, rather than any actual failure to comply with the relevant patent laws and regulations, or guidelines, e.g., as set forth in the Manual of Patent Examination Procedure.

Furthermore, with respect to the Examiner's objection to the statement “because of the selected arrangement, no inversely switched additional power circuit-breakers are needed” on the grounds that it contradicts claim 24, this claim has been canceled, without prejudice, rendering the objection moot.

As regards the Examiner's assertion that the statement “the at least one consumer including the at least one microprocessor distributes electric power” (claim 17) is confusing, it is submitted that having a consumer that is also a distributor is not necessarily inconsistent since a circuit element that draws current (i.e., a consumer) can also serve as a conduit (i.e., a distributor) of current to further elements.

As regards the phrase “a master signal-power distributor to one of control and protect the at least one satellite signal-power distributor” (recited in claim 21), it is submitted that this phrase, which states that the master signal-power distributor either controls or protects the one or more satellite signal-power distributes, is clear and is adequately supported in the specification at page 7, lines 3-17, for example.

As regards the assertion that the specification does not provide proper antecedent basis for the term “preselectable property” (recited in claim 16) or “consumer configured to carry a current” (recited in claim 22), without necessarily passing judgment on the merits of this objection, claim 16 has been amended to remove the term objected to, and as discussed above, the specification provides support for the term “consumer configured to carry a current,” e.g., on page 10, lines 10-22.

As regards the objection to the title, it is not understood what the Examiner is referring to since the title of the invention does not refer to a wiring loom, (see, e.g., English translation of International Application and Substitute Specification).

In light of the foregoing amendments and discussion, it is submitted that the specification and claims are clear, consistent and support by the specification. Withdrawal of the objections to the claims and specification is accordingly respectfully requested.

IV. Rejection of Claims 13-15, 17 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 13-15, 17 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schenk et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,907,194 ("Schenk") in view of Neuhaus, U.S. Patent No. 5,416,401. It is submitted that the combination of Schenk and Neuhaus fails to render obvious the subject matter of claims 13-15, 17 and 20 for the following reasons.

In rejecting a claim under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), the Examiner bears the initial burden of presenting a prima facie case of obviousness. In re Rijckaert, 9 F.3d 1531, 1532, 28 U.S.P.Q.2d 1955, 1956 (Fed. Cir. 1993). To establish prima facie obviousness, three criteria must be satisfied. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation to modify or combine reference teachings. In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988). This teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination must be found in the prior art and not based on the application disclosure. In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d 488, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991). Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. In re Merck & Co., Inc., 800 F.2d 1091, 231 U.S.P.Q. 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986). Third, the prior art reference(s) must teach or suggest all of the claim limitations. In re Royka, 490 F.2d 981, 180 U.S.P.Q. 580 (C.C.P.A. 1974).

Independent claim 13 recites, *inter alia*, the features of: a) a switching arrangement connects at least one of the consumers at a lower voltage level; and b) an arrangement for providing a short circuit protection, the arrangement configured to at least one of reduce a risk of a short circuit between the first voltage level and the second voltage level and minimize an effect of the short circuit. The Office Action relies on the Schenk reference as disclosing feature (a) and relies on the Neuhaus reference as disclosing feature (b).

It is initially noted that the winding switching element (12) of Schenk, which the Examiner equates with the claimed switching arrangement, does not connect at least one of the consumers at a lower voltage level. The element (12) switches the number of windings used in the generator and thus alters the output voltage of the generator, but does not

switchably connect to consumers at all. Since the Neuhaus reference does not cure this deficiency of the primary Schenk reference, claim 13 is patentable over the applied references for this reason alone.

Independent of the above, the Neuhaus reference refers to a dual voltage supply circuit that contains a starter battery and an auxiliary battery. (Neuhaus, Abstract). The Neuhaus reference discusses the use of a current limiter to protect the auxiliary battery from an overload (due to its lower capacity), but there is no suggestion that the current limiter is configured to prevent a short circuit between distinct nominal voltage levels. See Neuhaus, col. 4, lines 24-36.

It is accordingly submitted that the combination of the Schenk and Neuhaus references fails to disclose both features (a) and (b) of claim 13 recited above. Withdrawal of the obviousness rejection of claim 13 and its dependent claims 14-15, 17 and 20 is therefore respectfully requested.

V. Rejection of Claims 16, 22 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 16, 22 and 23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schenk and Neuhaus in view of Jabaji, U.S. Patent No. 5,907,233.

Claim 22 has been canceled and claims 16 and 23 depend from claim 13. Since the Jabaji reference does not cure the deficiencies of the Schenk and Neuhaus references discussed above as applied against parent claim 13, it is submitted that dependent claims 16 and 23 are patentable over the applied references.

VI. Rejection of Claims 18 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 18 and 28 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schenk and Neuhaus in view of Gillespie et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,393,573.

Claims 18 and 28 depend from claim 13. Since the Gillespie reference does not cure the deficiencies of the Schenk and Neuhaus references discussed above as applied against parent claim 13, it is submitted that dependent claims 18 and 28 are patentable over the applied references.

VII. Rejection of Claims 24-27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 24-27 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schenk, Neuhaus and Jabaji in view of EP-632558.

Claims 24-27 depend from claim 13. EP-632558 refers to a resetting protection device to counter short circuits in the on board electrical system of motor vehicles, which is inserted between the battery's positive pole and the branch point of the vehicle electrical system. The protection device is situated between a battery pole and a branch point, and the protection device does not concern an arrangement configured to at least one of reduce a risk of a short circuit between the first voltage level and the second voltage level and minimize an effect of the short circuit. Therefore, EP-632558 does not cure the deficiencies of the Schenk, Neuhaus and Jabaji references noted above as applied against parent claim 13. It is accordingly submitted that dependent claims 24-27 are patentable over the applied references.

CONCLUSION

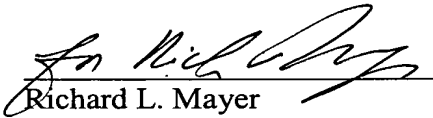
In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Prompt reconsideration and allowance of the present application are therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

KENYON & KENYON

Dated: 2/17, 2005

By:


Richard L. Mayer
Reg. No. 22,490

One Broadway
New York, New York 10004
(212) 425-7200

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